

Message Text

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SUBJ: WEST BANK ATTITUDES ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION

REF: JERUSALEM 1516

SUMMARY: ATTITUDES DESCRIBED IN EARLIER ANALYSES GENERALLY PERSIST, THOUGH SENSE OF DILEMMA HAS GROWN. WEST BANK IS MORE ANXIOUS THAN EVER TO BE RID OF ISRAELIS. RECENT REPORTS OF ISRAELI-JORDANIAN DEALS BRING MIXTURE OF RELIEF AT IMPENDING RELEASE AND BITTERNESS AT BEING DENIED SELF-DETERMINATION. WE JUDGE, IN LIGHT OF THESE REACTIONS ESPECIALLY, THAT WEST BANKERS WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH RETURN TO JORDAN IN SOME FORM DESPITE THEIR UNDERSTANDABLE DESIRE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION. WHETHER SOLUTION OF BASIC PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WOULD BE ADVANCED THEREBY, HOWEVER, WOULD DEPEND GOOD DEAL ON HOW HUSSEIN DEALT WITH WEST BANK. END SUMMARY

1. OUR DECEMBER 19 ANALYSIS (REFTEL) REMAINS GENERALLY VALID, THOUGH UNCERTAINTY AND PERPLEXITY HAVE PROBABLY INCREASED SOMEWHAT MORE. RECENT RUMORS ON WEST BANK (MORE IN SEPTTEL) THAT
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JERICHO WAS ABOUT TO BE TURNED BACK TO JORDAN AS FIRST STEP IN

RETURN TO 1967 BOUNDARIES BROUGHT SOME REJOICING THAT ISRAELIS WERE ON THEIR WAY OUT AND SOME BITTER DISMAY THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE ONCE AGAIN BEING DONE OUT OF THEIR NATIONAL RIGHTS. WE SUSPECT BOTH REACTIONS WERE MIXED IN VARIOUS PROPORTIONS IN MINDS OF MOST WEST BANKERS. THIS DUALITY TYPIFIES REACTION TO PALESTINIAN DILEMMA.

2. BETHLEHEM'S MAYOR FREIJ, WITH CYNICAL DESDAIN FOR PLO SUPPORTERS, TOLD US THERE WAS DANCING IN THE STREETS IN JERICHO (WE HADN'T HEARD OF ANY DANCING, BUT IT WOULDN'T ENTIRELY SURPRISE US.) IF JERICHO WENT BACK, FREIJ SAID, THE MAYORS OF ALL THE TOWNS WOULD BE RUNNING TO HUSSEIN CRYING "SAVE US." HE ADDED THAT, FOR HIMSELF, RETURN TO RELATIONSHIP WITH AMMAN WAS BEST SOLUTION BUT ONLY IF JORDAN MOVED TOWARD MORE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

3. NABLUS NOTABLE HIKMAT EL MASRI, SADAT MAN AND ADVOCATE OF PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION, SAW RUMORED TURNOVER, ON OTHER HAND, AS JORDANIAN-ISRAELI PLOT TO DENY PALESTINIANS THEIR NATIONAL DESTINY. WHEN PRESSED, HE GRANTED THAT WEST BANK WOULD TAKE HUSSEIN IF IT WAS ONLY WAY TO GET RID OF ISRAELIS, BUT RESULT WOULD BE CONTINUING CIVIL STRIFE UNLESS HUSSEIN PERMITTED WEST BANKERS REAL SELF-DETERMINATION (WHICH HE CONSIDERED NOT VERY LIKELY).

4. FARTHER TOWARD PALESTINIAN NATIONALIST END OF SPECTRUM, WE HEARD FROM PALESTINE NATIONAL FRONT ACTIVIST IN NABLUS THAT WEST BANK WOULD NEVER ACCEPT HUSSEIN, AND ACQUAINTANCE IN RAMALLAH TOLD US PALESTINE RESISTANCE FRONT WAS BEING ORGANIZED ON WEST BANK TO FIGHT HASHEMITES IF THEY RETURN.

5. BOTH FREIJ AND MASRI STRESSED OVERWHELMING DESIRE OF GREAT MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS TO BE RID OF ISRAELIS. TEDDY KOLLEK TOLD BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL LAST WEEK THAT ARABS, DISLIKING HUSSEIN AND FEARING PLO RETURN, WERE REALLY JUST AS HAPPY TO LIVE SECURELY UNDER ISRAELI RULE. IF THIS WERE EVER TRUE, RECENT CATASTROPHIC PRICE INCREASES (TEL AVIV 498; JERUSALEM 210) HAVE REMOVED ALL TRACES OF IT. PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY OF PRICE INCREASES MAY IN FACT BE HUSSEIN, WHO LOOKS MORE AND MORE LIKE THE ONE REALISTIC HOPE FOR GETTING OUT FROM UNDER OCCUPATION. (WE HAVE HEARD, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THAT INCREASES

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ARE SEEN BY SOME ARABS AS EVIDENCE THAT ISRAELI ECONOMY, WHICH THEY ONCE GRUDGINGLY ADMIRERD, WAS REALLY A PAPER TIGER. ISRAELI MYSTIQUE HAS SUFFERED HEAVILY IN LAST FEW MONTHS.)

6. WE HAVE SENSED SINCE OUR DEC 19 READING (JERUSALEM 1516) INCREASED RESERVATIONS ABOUT RETURN OF PLO. MORE FEARS ARE EXPRESSED ABOUT LIKELIHOOD OF STRIFE AMONG FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMPARISONS ARE MADE TO OLD DAYS OF CLAN FEUDING. EL MASRI

DISCOUNTS THIS POSSIBILITY, BUT ADDS "SURELY ISRAELIS WOULD NOT LET THEM BRING THEIR WEAPONS BACK." DESIRE TO HAVE PLO REPRESENT THEM IN GENEVA IS UNDIMINISHED BY THIS FEAR, HOWEVER, AS IS WISH FOR PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION.

7. THIS ALL LEAVES WEST BANKERS ABOUT WHERE THEY USUALLY ARE: WAITING TO SEE WHICH WAY EVENTS WILL CARRY THEM, WHICH WAY WIND WILL BLOW. WE WOULD JUDGE, AS OF NOW, THAT THEY WOULD LIVE WITH RETURN OF WEST BANK TO SOME RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN IF THIS WERE WORKED OUT FOR THEM BY HUSSEIN (WE ARE LEAVING JERUSALEM QUESTION ASIDE). THEY WOULD NOT SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS OUTCOME, HOWEVER, AND WOULD RESERVE RIGHT TO CONSIDER PALESTINIAN PROBLEM STILL UNRESOLVED.

8. PRO HUSSEIN NOTABLE KHATIB ARGUES THERE IS NO WAY TO SOLVE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT IN POLITICS ONE DOES BEST THAT IS POSSIBLE. RETURN TO PRE-1967 SITUATION, HE CONTENTS, IS BEST THAT CAN NOW BE DONE, WITH PALESTINIAN NATIONAL SOLUTION TO COME LATER. WE BELIEVE WEST BANKERS SEE THIS AS INCREASINGLY LIKELY OUTCOME, ASSUMING THERE IS ANY SETTLEMENT AT ALL FOR THEM.

9. COMMENT: THERE IS MUCH TO SUPPORT KHATIB'S POINT OF VIEW, DEPRESSING THOUGH IT MAY BE. SIMPLE RETURN TO PRE-1967 WOULD CLEARLY LEAVE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM UP IN THE AIR. PRACTICABLE VARIATIONS CAN READILY BE ENVISIONED, HOWEVER, WHICH WOULD AT LEAST COMMENCE PROCESS OF RESOLUTION. IF HUSSEIN GRANTED NEAR AUTONOMY TO WEST BANK, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH LOCALLY-ELECTED ADMINISTRATION, AND PARTICULARLY IF ISRAEL AGREED TO SAME STATUS FOR GAZA, REAL BEGINNINGS OF PALESTINIAN HOME WOULD EXIST. SOME OF REFUGEES IN BEIRUT AND SYRIA MIGHT ACCEPT RETURN TO THIS AREA AS MAJOR ELEMENT IN RETRIEVING THEIR RIGHTS. PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD NOT GIVE UP THE

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FIGHT, BUT THEIR POSITION WOULD TEND TO ERODE IF ARRANGEMENT WORKED WELL. IF HUSSEIN IS TO SPEAK FOR PALESTINIANS, HE HAS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT SOLUTION HE NEGOTIATES GOES FAR AS POSSIBLE TOWARD BASIC RESOLUTION OF PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. DAY

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